Dr. WILLIAMS's FIRST SERMON AT Mr. BOYLE's Lecture. 1695.

IMPRIMATUR,

Jan. 26. 169⅔. *Guil. Lancaster.*

THE remaining Sermons for this Year will be Preach'd at St. *Martins*, the First *Mondays* of *February*, *March*, *April*, *May*, *September*, *October*, and *November*.

The Possibility, Expediency, and Necessity of Divine Revelation.

A

SERMON

Preached at

St. *Martins in the Fields*, Jan. 7. 169⅘.

AT THE

Beginning of the LECTURE

For the Ensuing YEAR.

Founded by the Honourable

ROBERT BOYLE, Esquire.

By *JOHN WILLIAMS*, D. D.
Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

LONDON:
Printed for Ric. Chiswell, at the *Rose* and *Crown* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard: And Tho. Cockerill, at the *Three Legs* in the *Poultrey*. M DC XCV.

The Forfeiture, Expectancy, and Necessity of Divine Revelation.

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TO THE

Most Reverend Father in God,

THOMAS Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

Sir HENRY ASHHURST, Knight and Baronet.

Sir JOHN ROTHERAM, Serjeant at Law.

JOHN EVELYN, *Senior*, Esquire.

TRUSTEES by the Appointment of the Honourable *Robert Boyle*, Esquire.

MOST HONOURED,

HAving by your Generous Election entred this Year upon the Lecture founded by the Honourable Robert Boyle, *the Great Encourager of Piety and Learning*, it becomes me in Obedi-

ence to your Order, and according to the Intent of the Deceased, to Present You with the First-fruits of my Labour. The Subject I treat of is of Universal Concernment to the Christian World, and is to be handled with Reverence *and* Care: *The former I shall all along keep in my eye, and the latter I shall not neglect, as far as in me lies: But whatever Defects your Better Judgments shall espy throughout these* Compolures, *I hope the same Goodness that disposed you to place me in this Sphere, will incline you to overlook; and to accept of the Sincere Endeavours of,*

MOST HONOURED,

Your most Faithful and
Humble Servant,

JOHN WILLIAMS.

Heb. I. 1, 2.

God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners, ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son.

THERE are Two ways by which Mankind may attain to the Knowledge of Divine Things; namely, Natural or Supernatural.

Natural is what we have ſpringing up with our Faculties, or what we attain by Natural means, by Sight, Obſervation, and Experience, by Tradition (which is the Hiſtory of others Knowledge and Experience); and laſtly, by Reaſon and Argument, deducing Effects from their proper Cauſes, or finding out the Cauſe by its Effects: As for inſtance; Thus we come to the Knowledge of God by obſerving the Frame of the World, by the Series, Order, and Courſe

Course of Things, which could never be without some Cause to produce them, and that Cause no less than One Infinitely Powerful and Wise. Thus we Argue, That there is a Soul in Man distinct from the Body, and surviving a Separation from it; forasmuch as there are such Operations as are not Competent to Matter; and that there is such a desire of Immortality placed in Mankind, as would make the Flower and Choicest part of the Visible Creation, the most Miserable, if there was no Capacity in the Soul for such a State, or no such State for a Soul capable of it.

Such Inferences as these, are as Natural to a Reasonable Mind, as those Observations are which we make from the reports of Sense, and are therefore deservedly accounted Branches of Natural Religion.

Now this kind of Knowledge is more or less evident, is stronger or weaker, according to the capacities and dispositions of Mankind, and according to the opportunities and means they have of Information. And therefore a Philosopher that sets himself to enquire into the Mysteries of Nature, and to observe the Curiosity, Order and Beauty of its Fabrick, may, in Reason be supposed to be more confirmed in the Belief of a God

God, and more diſpoſed to Serve and Adore him, than he that is ignorant; as he that underſtands Painting or Carving, can more obſerve and applaud the Ingenuity and Skill of the Artiſt, than he that is unacquainted with it.

But after all, ſo much is the Subject above our reach, and ſo dark and intricate are all our Reaſonings upon it, that the Sageſt Philoſopher, in the concluſion, is left as unſatisfied as the meaneſt Peaſant; and perhaps more unſatisfied with his Knowledge, and the deep and unfathomable Abyſs he ſees before him, than the other is with his Ignorance; ſo far making good what *Solomon* obſerves, *He that increaſeth knowledge, increaſeth ſorrow*, Eccleſ. 1. 18.

So that there needs ſome brighter Light than that of Nature, to conduct us to Happineſs, and bring us to a compleat and entire Satisfaction; and that is a Supernatural Knowledge, a Knowledge that is not to be obtained by the ways aforeſaid, by Enquiry and Obſervation, but by Inſpiration and Revelation from Almighty God.

And this is the Subject of the Text.

God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners, ſpake in time paſt by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son.

In which Words we have,

1. A Description given of Revelation, *it's God's speaking to the Fathers*, &c. that is, it is God's delivering his Mind to Mankind by Persons chosen for that purpose, and peculiarly fitted for it by Inspiration. Such were the Prophets *in time past*, and the Son in the *last days*.

2. The certainty of it; it is by way of Declaration, *God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake*, &c. The Apostle takes this for granted, as having been sufficiently proved, and so needs no farther confirmation. So it was in *times past*, when *God spake by the Prophets*; and so it was in *the last days* in the Revelation of the Gospel, *which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was*, saith our Apostle, *confirmed unto us by them that heard him: God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost*, Chap. 2. 3, 4.

And therefore as *Moses* did not think himself obliged at the entrance into his Divine Work, to prove there is a God, and that God made the World, when there is such an inbred knowledge of a Deity implanted in human Nature, and such clear and undoubted evidences of it throughout the Universe; but supposes and asserts it, *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*: &c.

So

So after ſuch manifeſt proofs of the Divine Authority of both the Prophetical and Evangelical Revelation, the Apoſtle would not ſo much as ſuppoſe any doubt in the minds of thoſe he wrote to; but begins his Epiſtle, with a certain Majeſty becoming an Inſpired Author, *God who at ſundry times*, &c.

3. The Order obſerved in delivering that Revelation, it was *at ſundry times*, *and in divers manners.*

At ſundry times, πολυμερῶς, or in *ſeveral parts*; which may refer either to the ſeveral Ages and Periods, *viz.* The Patriarchal, Moſaical, and Prophetical; or to the ſeveral Manifeſtations of Divine Revelation through thoſe Ages and Periods; from the firſt Embryo of it in *Adam*, to the cloſe of it in *John* the Baptiſt; in whom the *time paſt* ended, and the *laſt days* began.

In divers manners, πολυτρόπως, according to the manifold ways the Divine Spirit thought fit to communicate it ſelf; whether by Illapſes on the Perſons Inſpired, or by Raptures, Viſions, Voices, *&c.*

4. The Perfection and Completion of Divine Revelation; *God hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken by his Son.* So that what was gradually, and *at ſundry times*, delivered *in time paſt to the Prophets*, was at

once intirely and perfectly Revealed by the Son of God, *whom he hath appointed heir of all things.*

Under the First of these I shall shew,

1. What we mean by Revelation.

2. The possibility of God's Revealing himself so to the Creature, that the Creature shall certainly and evidently know that it is God that speaketh.

3. The Expediency, Usefulness, and Necessity of a Revelation, with respect to the Circumstances Mankind are in.

Under the Second I shall shew,

1. That as it's possible for God to Reveal himself, and Expedient and Necessary for man that there should be a Revelation; so God has actually thus Revealed himself *at sundry times, and in divers manners by the Prophets*, through the several Periods before spoken of, and *in the last days by his Son.*

2. I shall consider the difference between a real and pretended Revelation, and how we may distinguish the true from the false.

3. I shall shew, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain the matter of Divine Revelation, and have upon them the Characters belonging to it.

Under

Under the Third,

1. I ſhall conſider the ſeveral ways by which God did Reveal himſelf *in times paſt by the Prophets*, as by Illapſes, Inſpirations, Viſions, *&c.*

2. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the difference between Divine Inſpirations, and Diabolical Illuſions, Natural Impreſſions, and Deluſory Imaginations.

3. I ſhall conſider the ſeveral Periods before the Law, under the Law, and under the Goſpel; and the gradual progreſs of Revelation from firſt to laſt, from the lower to the higher degree, and the perpetual reſpect one had to the other.

4. I ſhall conſider why God did thus gradually, and at *ſundry times*, proceed in Revealing his Will to Mankind; and why he did not at the firſt Communicate his Will to them as fully, and perfectly, as he did *in the laſt days by his Son.*

Under the Fourth,

I ſhall ſhew the Perfection of the Goſpel-Revelation, and that there is not to be any other Revelation till the End cometh when our *Lord ſhall be revealed from heaven*, and ſhall *deliver up the kingdom to the Father.*

I have choſen thus at once to lay in Order the Scheme of what I intend (God granting Life and Aſſiſtance) to purſue; that ſo the dependance

ance of one upon another, and the assistance each Point gives to the other throughout the whole, might be the better observed.

I. I am to begin with Revelation.

1. Where I am to consider, What we mean by Revelation; which is nothing else in the first Notion, but the making known that which before was a secret; so things *revealed* and *secret*, are opposed, *Deut.* 29. 29.

And when it's applied to a Religious use, it's God's making known Himself, or his Will, to Mankind, over and above what he has made known by the Light of Nature and Reason.

Here we may observe, that there are Three Classes, into which whatever is the Object of our Knowledge may be reduced.

1. There are things of pure and simple Nature, and knowable by the Light of it, without Revelation; of this kind is the Knowledge of God by the Effects of a Divine Power and Wisdom in the world (as has been shewed) of which the Apostle treats, *Rom.* 1. 20. *The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.*

2. There are things of pure and simple Revelation, that are not knowable by the Light of Nature,

Nature, but only by Revelation; and if not Revealed, are never in this ſtate (at leaſt) to be known or found out by Mankind; of this ſort is the Salvation of the World by Jeſus Chriſt, which was not diſcoverable by Men or Angels; ſo the Apoſtle deſcribes the Myſtery of it, *Epheſ.* 3. 9, 10. *Which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God,* ------ *to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold Wiſdom of God.* So 1 *Pet.* 1. 12.

3. There are things partly of Nature, and partly of Revelation, diſcoverable by the Light of Nature, but imperfectly, which we *ſee,* as it were, *through a glaſs darkly*; and ſo they need Revelation to give them farther Proof and Evidence; of this the Apoſtle gives an inſtance, 2 *Tim.* 1. 10. when he ſaith our Saviour *brought life and immortality to light through the Goſpel,* φωτίσαντα, making it as evident as the Light; whereas before it was rather wiſhed for, than certain, as was the caſe of the Heathens; or much involv'd in Types, as among the *Jews, Heb.* 4. 3, *&c.* So that Revelation, of which ſort ſoever it is, is Supernatural, and is only from God.

2. I

2. I shall shew the Possibility of a Revelation, and that Almighty God, if he so pleases, can so Reveal himself to the Creature, that the Creature shall certainly and evidently know that the Revelation comes from God.

This one would reasonably think should need no proof; and I shall therefore briefly touch upon it, that I may proceed to the Third, which I principally intend to make the Subject of this present Discourse.

I say it's possible for God to Reveal himself to his Creatures.

(1.) Why should this be questioned, when we every day see men mutually discover their Minds each to other; and by the use and direction of certain Organical Powers, signify their Intentions, Desires, and Commands? And why may not the Creator Reveal his Will to the Creature, when one Creature thus can do it to another?

(2.) Why should this be questioned, when we may by certain Evidences know that a person is sent from God? And then certainly the person that produces such Evidences as are to the satisfaction of others, may himself be satisfied of the truth of his own Commission, and the certainty of a Divine Revelation. The former, that others may be satisfied concerning a Mission from

from God, is evident from ſuch things declared, which none but God could Reveal, as Prophecies; and ſuch things done, which none but God, in man, could do, as Miracles. Where theſe are, they are as evident Proofs of a Revelation and Miſſion from God, as the works of Creation are a Proof a Divine Agent. The works of Creation prove a God, becauſe they are worthy of ſuch an Infinite Cauſe, and what none but ſuch a Cauſe could produce: And when ſuch things are diſcovered, which none but an Omniſcient Being could diſcover, and ſuch things done, which none but an Almighty Power could do; we are, by a Parity of Reaſon, aſſure that there is ſuch a Revelation by which ſuch things are made known, and in confirmation of which ſuch mighty Works are done.

(3.) If this be queſtioned, it muſt be from a deficiency in God to impart ſuch a Revelation to man; or that there is an incapacity in man to receive it. But how can God's Power herein be queſtioned that he can Operate thus on the Soul, when he both Created it, and is thoroughly acquainted with all the ſecret ſprings of Motion, all the tendencies and inclinations, all the thoughts and deſires of it, and conſequently muſt be ſuppoſed to have a Power of directing it as he

 pleaſes?

pleases? And how can there be any incapacity in man, when as to the matter he can both receive it, and deliver it as he received; and as to the manner, it's in a way suitable to his Faculties, and is therefore call'd here, God's *speaking* to the Prophets, which is so as the other may understand.

This is a matter so evident, that it has been generally believed throughout the world among the Heathens; and therefore nothing more common than to have Oracles, Places where they were wont to consult their Deities, as well as the *Jews* had theirs: A Subject I am not at present concerned in, but it's sufficient to shew what has been the sense of all Ages in this case: And which even those that would call this in question, in part consent to, while they grant somewhat equivalent to it, if not a branch of it, I mean Prophecy; which when it falls not within the Power of any Natural Causes, is the product of what is Supernatural, and what the Prophet must then receive from a higher hand, God.

Grant this, and the whole will follow; for if it be possible in one case, it's possible in all, to one and the same Infinite Power.

3. I am to Consider the Expedience, Usefulness, and Necessity of a Revelation; for that is here supposed, when it's said, *God spake in time past, and in these last days*; that is, from the beginning of the world to that time.

Now Revelation is a means extraordinary (as has been shewed) and consequently such as the means are, such must the case be, extraordinary; for God, not doing any thing in vain, cannot be supposed to use extraordinary means, where the case is ordinary, and may as well be served by ordinary means. Thus it is in Miracles, which are acts above the common standard of Nature, and are then only exerted, when nothing less will engage the Attention or Faith of Mankind. And so it is in Revelation, which is to the Light of Reason, what Miracles are to the common Law of Nature, Supernatural and Extraordinary; and consequently where Almighty God takes that course for the Information of Mankind, it shews that there is some deficiency or corruption that calls for it, and makes it expedient and necessary. As it was with *Adam* at his first Creation, who being an utter stranger to himself, and the world he was at once brought into, without some further kind of Information, instead of a pleasure he might have taken in viewing the glo-

rious Fabrick of the Heavens, and the variety of Creatures in the Earth, must have been full of Amazement and Confusion. For in so wide a Scene as was before him, Where must he begin, or where could he hope to end? How divided must he be in his own Mind? What a cold and dry Speculation would it have been, if he had hit upon it, to have concluded, with that Modern Philosopher, *Cogito, ergo sum; I think, therefore I am*?

He indeed felt himself to be, but how he came to be, he knew not; for he saw nothing about him that could either be supposed to have given him that Being, or could tell him how he came by it. He saw he had a Body, and a Body that obsequiously moved as he pleased to direct and determine; but what that Body was originally made of, he could not possibly tell: For how could he suppose such warm, soft, and tender Flesh, those firm and well compacted Joynts, those radiant and sparkling Eyes (which he had as other living Creatures) that moveable and limber, and well-complexioned matter of which his Body consisted, should be formed out of cold, moveless, crumbling, and shapeless Earth?

He felt his Body move, and pliable in all its motions to his Will, and quick as Thought to answer

ver his Mind, but what that inward Principle was that moved it, he was wholly ignorant; nor could he possibly, of himself at that instant, conceive that there was an inward Immaterial Spirit that was vitally United to a Gross and Material Body, that was the Principle of all, and was as distinct from the Body in it's Nature and Subsistence, as if it were not United at all to it. He might observe the Creatures about him of different sorts, that there were certain Notes that each Kind had, and all were known and understood among themselves; but that notwithstanding they were all dumb to him, and he to them; and what it was that made the difference, he could not understand. When he pleased himself in the Contemplation of the Heavens above, and that glorious Luminary that gave (as he perceived) Light to all about him; he could not tell whether it was an intelligent Being, and that as it gave Light to all, so it was Superior to them: And when that set, he knew not but he was to be inclosed in perpetual Darkness. When a heavy Stupidness began to seize himself, and he was forced to submit to the power of it, he knew not but it was to end that Life, which was that day began, and that he was to close his Eyes, and conclude his Life together.

So

So that though he had what we call Reason, and suppose it as his Body, in its prime; yet even that Reason must have been his Torment for a while; when it made him inquisitive, but could not give him satisfaction.

To prevent which disorder and confusion he would otherwise be in, at the first opening of his Eyes and his Mind together, as it was necessary that he that was to begin the world, should be Created in a full Age and Strength; and that he that was alone, should have a present power and faculty of Elocution and forming of Words for the Conversation he was to have with the *Help* designed for him; so it was requisite that he should have some immediate Inspiration, to inform him of what was necessary for him to know as to God, himself, and the World; and which he could not have known without such Inspiration, or the slow and tedious compass of Observation; and so must have waited for satisfaction till time and experience had formed his Judgment, and made him a wise Philosopher.

But this *Adam* was at the first, and so forthwith knew whom it was that he was to own as the Author of his Being, and of what his Body was made, and by what means an Intelligent

pure Spirit came to be inclosed in a Material Body, and could as soon resolve all those perplexing doubts, which otherwise he would have been assaulted with, as he understood at first sight that *Eve was bone of his bone*; and knew how to give Names to the Creatures suitable to their Natures, *Gen.* 2. 19, 23.

But now the reasons for such an Inspiration to *Adam* were personal, belonging to him alone; but after what manner the Divine Wisdom would have imparted the Knowledge of it self to *Adam*'s Posterity, if he and they had stood and continued in a state of Primogenial Innocency; or whether there would, in those Circumstances, have been any need of a Supernatural Inspiration after the Revelation made to *Adam*, from whom they might have Infallibly received it; no more concerns us, than it doth to know how Mankind would then have been disposed of when they were not to Dye, but to have subsisted in the same State, Body and Soul inseparably United: Those are among the *secret things which belong unto God*; but *things revealed belong unto us*.

We must therefore alter the Scene, and consider Mankind in a State of Imperfection and Depravation; and there we shall find Revelation

tion absolutely necessary as a remedy against a fourfold Mischief, which, without it, would unavoidably ensue; As with respect to the Confusion *Adam* was in by reason of Guilt; The Danger he was in from his Enemy, The Subtile and Malicious Serpent; The Ruin that threatned him from the impotency and disorder he found in his Faculties; which like a Dislocation in the Limbs, though fit in themselves for Action, yet being removed out of their Sockets are not capable of discharging their Functions.

This being the State of Fallen Man, there was need of a Supervenient Revelation to recover him, as well as it was the determination of the Divine Goodness to design it.

There was need of this to comfort him under the sense of his Apostacy and the Guilt he had contracted, to prevent his Despair: To fortify him against the power of his insolent and triumphant Adversary, and to aid him under his contracted disability, for preventing his Discouragement: And to caution him against the sad effects of his Depravation, or the falling into a repetition of a new disobedience, for preventing his Presumption.

For

For theſe Reaſons Almighty God ſo ſoon interpoſed in the Garden by a new Revelation of Himſelf, and Inſtructed him in his gracious deſign to reſtore him to Favour, and in the method he would obſerve for that purpoſe, in what he ſaith to the Serpent, *Gen.* 3. 15. *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy ſeed and her ſeed: it ſhall bruiſe thy head, and thou ſhalt bruiſe his heel.*

Thus the Goſpel was Preached to *Adam*, who was the firſt Prophet to whom the Myſtery of Salvation was revealed; to which thoſe places in the *New Teſtament* ſeem to refer, *Luke* 1. 70. *As he ſpake by the mouth of his holy Prophets ſince the world began*; ἀπ' αἰῶνος, from the beginning, ſo *Acts* 3. 21.

This was the caſe of *Adam*, and the exigence he would have been in, without this immediate and comfortable Revelation.

And the Condition of his Poſterity would have been worſe than his, without a Revelation; had this Revelation died with this their Progenitor, and not have been tranſmitted to them.

For beſides the ſtate of Guilt, which muſt equally have invaded them as it did him, and what Conſcience in them could no more quietly digeſt, than in him; there were ſeveral diſad-

vantages they laboured under, which he did not.

As if we consider *Adam* in a bare State of Nature (without any Supernatural provision) he had this advantage above his Posterity, that being Created in a full Age, he was free from all prepossessions of Sense or Education; and in the first moment of his Being, had his Reason clear in the fountain of it, like the Sun in its Meridian Glory, and all his Faculties bright, and as ripe at once for Observation and Reflection, as his Body was for Action.

But his Posterity growing up from their Infancy among sensible Objects, from thence would (in a meer course of Nature) have received all their Information; and by slow degrees from things Visible, must have argued themselves into the Belief of things Invisible; and from the Effects of a Supreme Cause, to the Supreme Cause it self; which in the Apostle's Words, *Acts* 17.27. would be to *seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him,* [ψηλαφησειαν, as men blundering in the dark] *and find him.*

In such danger would the fundamental Principles of Natural Religion have been, if there had been no Revelation to prevent it: And this was the reason of such a provision by Inspired Persons, to preserve those Principles alive and safe;

ſafe; of the number of whom *Abel* is accounted, and therefore called a Prophet, *Luke* 11. 50. and *Enoch*, *Jude* 14. and *Noah* 2 *Pet.* 2. 5.

But now as the Rays of the Sun, the farther they are projected, grow weaker and weaker; ſo it was in the derivation of theſe Principles, which loſt very much of their primitive luſtre; and notwithſtanding the certainty of the evidence, the credibility and authority of thoſe Holy Patriarchs; Vice, like a deluge, broke in upon the world, ſo that *every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts* (generally ſpeaking) *was only evil continually*, Gen. 6. 5.

And if now when there was a Revelation, and a Revelation ſeconded by the Authority of ſuch Eminent Perſons, the World ſo ſoon grew Corrupted, What would it not have been, if there had been no ſuch Revelation, or no ſuch Curators of it?

And this the World was ſoon ſenſible of after the Flood; for notwithſtanding ſo late and aſtoniſhing an inſtance of the Divine Vengeance, yet in their ſeveral Diſperſions, for want of a Revelation, they loſt the ſenſe of the true and great Principles of Religion; ſome, as the *Chaldeans*, turning it into a vain Inquiry into the Influences of the Heavenly Bodies; others placing

their Religion in ridiculous and opprobrious Superstitions, as the *Egyptians*; others pleasing themselves in nice Disputations, and the Vanity of new-discovered Deities and Religions, as the *Greeks*: And all acting in Divine matters, as if they were in inextricable Labyrinths, being distracted, and eternally divided about the Origine of the World, whether it were Eternal, or Accidental, or the Product of a Divine Power; about the Origine of Evil; about the Government of the World, whether it be by different Deities, Good or Evil; or whether by none, but be wholly Acted by the levity of Chance, or the immutable Law of Destiny and Fate.

So that in process of time the World was brought into the condition of *Elymas*, *Acts* 13. 8, 11. that once had the advantage and pleasure of Sight, but upon the opposition made to St. *Paul*, *immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, that he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.* Too close a Representation of the condition of Mankind in that Degenerate State, who because that *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God --- but became vain in their imaginations; their foolish heart was darkned*, Rom. 1. 21. Of which darkness and confusion in matters of the greatest importance, the World, the Commonalty as well as the Philo-

sophical

ſophical part of Mankind, was ſenſible, and of the neceſſity of a Revelation, or ſomewhat beyond Nature, Reaſon and Argumentation, to remove theſe difficulties, to inform them of what they could not otherwiſe know, and to clear up to them what they did know but imperfectly.

Of which I ſhall offer ſome undeniable Inſtances.

1. They univerſally complained of the loſs they were at, and of the inſufficiency of all their Maxims and Principles, of all their Enquiries and Speculations, to give them any tolerable ſatisfaction; ſo that they were in nothing more divided, than about what Happineſs is, as St. *Auſtin* from *Varro* has ſhew'd: And therefore there was ſomewhat further neceſſary to ſatisfy them, or elſe they muſt for ever remain unſatisfied.

2. There was nothing more deſired than a Revelation, and therefore they were prone to hearken to all pretences to it; and when they conceived, or were made to believe it was a Revelation, they were in nothing more obſequious and pliable. So that to gain Authority to his Laws, and to keep the People Quiet and Orderly, *Numa Pompilius* did then (as *Mahomet* of latter

latter years) pretend he had all by Revelation from the Nymph *Egeria*. And of such Authority was this pretence, that as *Tully* saith, *There was nothing so absurd which was not maintained by some of the Philosophers*; so I may say, There was nothing so fooliſh, or wicked, which was not an ingredient in the Worſhip they gave to their Deities. Inſomuch, as the nature of things ſhould be perverted, Reaſon and Humanity ſhould be abandoned, and God himſelf be made worſe than thoſe that Worſhipped him, in compliance with their pretended Revelations. What Beaſtiality and Lewdneſs! what Savage and Barbarous Practices and Rites were allowed and required! The Blood of Captives, and of their own Children, muſt be a Libation; nay, even Suicide was not only Honourable, but a Religious Martyrdome, if the Oracle commanded it; and they choſe rather to be unnatural to the higheſt degree, than not to be Obedient to Divine Revelation. Now of what authority muſt that be, which ſhould over-rule the Laws of Nature, and ſo infatuate Mankind, that they ſhould not be able to eſpy the Impoſture? And what could thus impoſe upon them, if they were not ſenſible of the imperfect ſtate they were in, and the need they

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good in of ſome higher Principle and, greater Light to direct them, than that of Nature?

3. There was no Nation without a Revelation, that is, without ſome pretence to it, and which they generally vouched for their Rites and Religious Obſervances; from whence it was that there was ſcarcely a People of any note in the more Civilized parts of the World that had not their Sibyls, ſuch as were accounted to be the mouth of their God; to be ſure none in any part of the known world without an Oracle, that they repaired to, and whoſe Injunctions they readily Obeyed. The uſe I make of all this is to ſhow, what a ſenſe Mankind had of a Revelation, and what all the World has thought Expedient, if not Neceſſary, which was the thing to be proved.

From what has been ſaid, we may obſerve,

1. What a Happineſs it is to have a Revelation, by which Mankind are *brought out of darkneſs into a marvellous light*; and from an endleſs and fruitleſs Enquiry, *Who will ſhew us any good?* are placed in a quiet and full poſſeſſion of it. If there be no Revelation, we

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are, as it were, *without God in the world*; and know not whether that Divine Power be our Friend or our Enemy; or whether it shall be exerted to our Good or our Ruine. If there be no Revelation, *we are still in our sins*, and have no Sanctuary against the accusation of our own embittered Consciences, the fears of our own guilty Minds, or the Justice of an incensed Deity. If there be no Revelation, we have *no hope*, and can have no comfort in our Death, and no assurance of Immortality after it. If there be no Revelation, we are in a perpetual maze, as if we were at Sea without Star or Compass, and knew not what course to take to gain our Harbour. So thoughtful and pensive, so confounded and lost is Mankind without this, that if I were to chuse whether I would have no Revelation, or a false one, for the quiet of my own mind (did I believe the false one to be true) I would rather chuse the content of the latter, than the distraction of the former, and leave it to my own reason to rectify the manifest mistakes in it, rather than have my hovering Reason to be my constant affliction under the want of Revelation.

But Blessed be God that there is no cause for such a supposition, and that we have all the reason in the world to believe there is a Revelation;

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a Revelation that is ſuch as all Mankind would deſire, that touches upon all points neceſſary to our comfort and entire ſatisfaction, as to the Nature and Will of God, the Preſent and Future State of Mankind, the Providence that Governs this World, and the Rewards of another. A Revelation, where all the parts of it agree together, and bear a conformity to the Nature of things, to the Holineſs, Juſtice, and Mercy of God, and to the Reaſon of Mankind; where there is a Syſtem of the beſt Principles, and a Scheme of the beſt Rules and Directions; and which, like the Book of Nature, the more it's viewed and conſulted, the more do the lively Characters of a Divine Hand and Wiſdom appear in the Compoſure.

A Character this is that the Book of Scripture exactly anſwers. For what holy Precepts! what heavenly Promiſes! what uſeful Examples! what excellent Encouragements do the Sacred Pages abound in! Such as are ſufficient to direct us in every point of our Duty, to inform us in every neceſſary Truth, to eſtabliſh our Hearts in every condition of Life, to enable us to encounter all the difficulties of it with Reſolution, and to bear all the evil of it with Patience. Here behold God Reconciled to Mankind, the

trembling Sinner Pardoned, the Weak sustained, the Doubtful satisfied, and nothing wanting on God's part to make us Happy, if we are not wanting in a fit disposition of Mind to receive it.

So that if there be any Revelation, it is the Christian; if that be not a Revelation from God, there is no Revelation in the World; And if that be a Revelation, that only is so, and there can be no other.

II. Such as the Revelation is, such is the Obligation; the Authority it receives from God, the Obligation lies upon us to Obey as well as Believe it. *The times of ignorance God winked at*, and overlook'd; *but now he commandeth all men every where to repent*, Acts 17. 30: He hath *commanded* them by a Revelation, which is of universal concernment, and extends its Authority over the World. So that a Bad man is no better or safer for a Revelation, how perfect soever it be, and how great soever the advantages of it are, than he that is without Revelation; nay, so much the worse, as the latter is a state of Unbelief, the former of Disobedience; this errs without his will, but the other with it. And therefore if the Heathens, who had only the Book of Nature to read, and a blundering Reason

son for their Guide, were yet so far inexcusable, because that *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God*, Rom. 2. 21. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation? which at the first was spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by those that heard him; God also bearing them witness*, &c. *Heb.* 2. 3, 4.

What remains then, but since *the Grace of God*, in the Revelation of the *Gospel*, *hath appeared unto all men*, that we be thereby taught to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godlily in this present world.* And then we may comfortably *look for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Tit. 2. 11.

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